

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please replace paragraph [0033] with the following amended paragraph:

[0033] A still further exemplary non-limiting but illustrative embodiment of the

present invention is directed to a game apparatus (100) for being interconnected to

another game apparatus to be used in a plurality to allow a plurality of users to

simultaneously play the same game software program. The apparatus includes:

- at least one operation key (10) for user manipulation;
- communication means (30, 40) for being coupled to the other game apparatus or game apparatuses to receive and transmit operation key status data representing a state of the at least one operation key;
- buffer storage means (50) for sequentially storing operation key status data associated with the plurality of game apparatuses in response to a round of data communication;
- operation data storage means (60) for storing operation key status data associated with each of the plurality of game apparatuses, the operation key status data being for use with game processing; and
- transfer means (70) for transferring the operation key status data stored in the buffer storage means to the operation data storage means.

When the operation key status data stored in the buffer storage means as a result of a given round of data communication include valid operation key status data and invalid data, only the valid operation key status data among the operation key status data resulting from a plurality of rounds of data communication including the given round are transferred by the transfer means to the operation data storage means, without

transferring the invalid data, so that at least one such valid operation key status data is transferred for each of the plurality of game apparatuses.

Please replace paragraph [0071] with the following amended paragraph:

[0071] As described above, according to one non-limiting embodiment, the data ("operation key status data") concerning the state of the operation keys in the operation section 10 of each game machine is exchanged between the game machines. This avoids the need to exchange any data of trigger information (which may indicate that "character A jumps", for example), between the game machines. The effects and advantages resulting from this feature of the present invention will be described with reference to FIG. 4. FIG. 4 illustrates respective example transmission data which are transmitted at communication timing points t1 to t8 in relation to changing states of an operation key in the operation section 10. It is herein assumed that this operation key is a button for causing character A to jump in the game. Since a player's action of depressing and then releasing a button is substantially slow relative to the processing speed of a game machine, the duration of a button depression would typically span a number of communication timing points (e.g., t4 to t7, as shown in FIG. 4).

Please replace paragraph [00101] with the following amended paragraph:

[00101] Thus, according to the present embodiment of the invention, in response to the start point of a V blanking period for the parent machine 100a, data communication is begun by the parent machine 100a during V blank interrupt handling. After the data communication is completed, the received data is transferred to the received data buffer

50 in each of the game machine 100a to 100b. As described above, the received data buffer 50 is a so-called FIFO buffer capable of storing a plurality of data on a first-in-first-out basis, and allows the received data to be stored in the received data buffer ~~50 in~~ 50 in a sequential order.

Please replace paragraph [00103] with the following amended paragraph:

[00103] Hereinafter, the V blanking wait process will be described with reference to a series of flowcharts shown in FIGS. 11 and 12. In the V blanking wait process, the CPU 70 first awaits a V blanking period (S302). Once a V blanking period begins, general sound processing is performed (S304), and then a multi-play communication mode is detected (S306). If a multi-play communication mode is detected, the process proceeds to Step S308. If a multi-play communication mode is not detected, the process proceeds to Step S340. At Step S308, it is determined whether or not the received data buffer (FIFO buffer) 50 is empty. If the received data buffer is empty, the process proceeds to Step S328, S330. If the received data buffer is not empty, the process proceeds to Step S310 to transfer valid operation key status data from the received data buffer 50 to the operation data buffer 60.

Please replace paragraph [00122] with the following amended paragraph:

[00122] Although a plurality of game machines 100a to ~~100d~~ 100d are interconnected via the communication cable 200 according to the present embodiment of the invention, the present invention is not limited to such a configuration. For example, a plurality of computer terminals which operate in accordance with a game program may

SENGOKU, Toshio  
Appl. No. 10/021,302  
February 23, 2004

be coupled to a network, and data communication among the terminals may occur over the network. Alternatively, the communication among the game machines may occur in a wireless manner.

---